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Personal Narrative Views of Mothers and Their Children: Setting Events for Mother-Child Interactions?

Meredith P. Schwartzman
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Meredith P. Schwartzman entitled "Personal Narrative Views of Mothers and Their Children: Setting Events for Mother-Child Interactions?." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Robert G. Wahler, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Derek R. Hopko, Lowell Gaertner

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Personal Narrative Views of Mothers and Their Children: Setting Events for Mother-Child Interactions?

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Meredith P. Schwartzman

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Dr. Alan S. Peiken and Rhoda Y. Peiken, and my husband, Lee P. Schwartzman. To my parents, I thank you for always supporting my curiosity and desire to know more. Dad, you introduced me into the world of science and furthered my interest in the workings of the world. Without you, I would have never made it this far. Mom, you are the epitome of a responsive parent, and I aim to emulate you in everything I do. To Lee, I thank you for physically and emotionally supporting me during this journey. You have been there to pick me up when I was down, celebrate with me on my accomplishments, and dream with me on the rest. Without all of you, I know this would never have happened.

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ABSTRACT

The personal narratives of mothers and children were examined for coherence and richness. Both were assessed for commonalities in narrative structure and possible links to mother's responsiveness and child's aversive behaviors. Narrative structure was empirically manipulated to assess changes on responsiveness and child negativity. A sample of thirty mother-child dyads were recruited for participation from normal populations and ten mother-child dyads were recruited through the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic. Measures included the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), Personal Narrative (Castlebury & Wahler, 1997), and the Standardized Observation Codes-Revised (SOC-R, see Cerezo, 1988). Mother and child narratives were associated. The richer the mother's narratives, the more coherent the child's narratives were. The ability for a child to tell a coherent narrative buffered against adverse behavior problems. The result indicate that coherence does not fluctuate, but richness was able to be increased through clinic conversation sessions. Mother's responsiveness increased as means of parent-training and thus child negativity decreased.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human attachment to other human beings is an abstract concept that has intrigued psychologists for decades. Attachment may be best understood as mental representations, or "internal working models" of the attached figure (Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy, 1985). John Bowlby developed this concept of "internal working model" as a mental representation of different aspects of the world, self, others, and the relationships that are of special significance to the self. This model appears to be integral for attachment as it guides appraisals of experience and behavior. Main, et. al (1985) further explored the idea of "internal working models" by stating that one's model of relationship must be inferred from observations of the individual interacting with another. These interactions begin in infancy between the infant and its caregiver. Thus, the different types of experiences from infancy lead to various internal representations (Main, et. al, 1985).

Main, et. al (1985) drew from aspects of object relations theories and cognitive theories of schemata to help describe how the infant actually forms these mental representations. They mentioned Fairbairn's 1946 writings about the internal world of the infant as separated into good and bad objects, and the feeling of security is derived from the infant's ability to affectively handle the internal good and bad objects. Main, et. al (1985) also incorporated Mandler's 1983 view of the development of internal representations from the child's memory as being guided by generalized representations

of experienced events that help organize experiences schematically. Thus, the internal working model of the parent-child relationship should be formed out of the infant's past experiences of the parent's care giving responses to the infant (Main, et. al, 1985).

Measurements of this representational concept are difficult to obtain. Main, et. al (1985) posited that such measurements could be gathered via language. The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) was developed to explore adult's mental representations of attachment manifested through discussing childhood experiences. The type of mental representation an adult may have of his/her own childhood attachment experiences is thought to be exhibited in the coherence of the discourse (van IJzendoorn, 1995). How clear and relevant the discourse is during the interview is linked to three major adult attachment classifications: preoccupied, dismissive, and autonomous (van IJzendoorn, 1995). An individual is classified as preoccupied when they show a confused, angry, or passive preoccupation with individuals (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Preoccupied individuals' narratives tend to include nonsense words or jargon, and their sentences tend to be long and entangled (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Individuals are classified as dismissive when they describe others in a positive light, but these descriptions are unsupportive or contradicted later in the discourse (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Some dismissive individuals state that they cannot remember specific childhood experiences. An autonomous individual is classified as such when their discourse of attachment-related experiences is coherent and consistent (van IJzendoorn, 1995). The narratives of autonomous individuals are clear and concise (van IJzendoorn, 1995).

A parent's mental representations of his/her own childhood attachments have been thought to strongly influence the attachment between the parent and child (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Individual differences in these mental representations are thought to influence parent's responsiveness to their child's signals of attachment. Responsive mothers appear to encompass sensitivity and an ability to exercise good judgment by reacting appropriately to all of her child's behaviors (Wahler, Herring, & Edwards, 2001). She has the ability to pay attention to the major and minor actions and words of her child, yet she knows how and when to respond. By being a responsive parent, the mother conveys her interest in the child and a willingness to understand her child's thoughts, feelings, and opinions, which generates a feeling of warmth and acceptance in the child (Wahler, Herring, & Edwards, 2001).

A study conducted by Solomonica-Levi, Yirmiya, Erel, Samet, and Oppenheim (2001) suggested that children with behavior problems depicted mothers as less responsive compared to children without reported behavior problems. The behavior of these mothers of children with behavior problems was characterized by inconsistent limit setting (Solomonica-Levi, et. al, 2001). Thus, children seem to be negatively influenced by lack of maternal responsiveness. Wahler, et. al (2001) demonstrated that mother-child dyads were able to generate "synchrony," a reciprocal and mutually rewarding experience, when children's prosocial behaviors were matched with maternal responsiveness. The child's cooperation and mother's judicious and timely use of social attention and instruction also included a high likelihood of the child following maternal instruction (Wahler, Herring, & Edwards, 2001).

It appears that these mental representations of the other and previous experiences serve as a template to guide future behavior. Main, et. al (1985) stated that the "internal working models" of the world develop from our past experiences. By combining all of the experiences one has of the world we continuously mold the working models. Perhaps these models act as a template in which we compare new experiences to the old; we make sense of the present by how it relates to our past experiences. This template helps to organize and categorize the past, and it also serves the same function for present and future experiences (Wahler & Castlebury, 2002). It is thought that personal narratives or the personal accounts of the past are a representation of this template. The stories we tell provide a way in which we temporally organize our world and help us attribute emotion and understanding to our past experiences (Wahler & Castlebury, 2002). If this is the case, then the telling of our story helps us to pattern new experiences based on this past. Welch-Ross (1997) indicated that in order for a child to use language as a referent of the past, he/she must first understand that the language refers to a mental representation of the actual event. As children begin to integrate these mental representations of the self and other and temporally place them in the past and present, they are better able to represent themselves as truly experiencing any event (Welch-Ross, 1997). A coherent and rich narrative would indicate a coherent representation of the past. This theoretical idea of a template of behavior has not clearly been studied thus far. Empirically understanding how this template works may help us better understand how narratives serve as a representation of the working template.

There is a growing body of evidence pointing to mothers' mental representations as maps for these parents' social negotiations with their young children (see the meta-analysis by van IJzendoorn, 1995). While this evidence is limited by its correlational nature, the empirical model derived across studies shows associations between mothers' molar views of personal life experiences and their sensitivity to their children's behaviors. In essence, the findings suggest that a mother's ability to present a clear and elaborate narrative adds somehow to her competence in childcare. Mother's who have such clear and elaborative narratives may be better able to respond appropriately to her child's behaviors without distorting her perceptions of her child's behaviors (van IJzendoorn, 1995). In van IJzendoorn's (1995) meta-analysis, narrative coherence accounted for about 12% of the variance in mothers' appropriate reactions to their children's social cues, supporting the contention that these adults narrative abilities contribute to their success in the social contingency arena.

Surprisingly, there have been only a few studies geared to experimental manipulations of mothers' narratives as causal factors in their sensitivity to child behavior. In a recent meta-analysis of maternal sensitivity and children's attachment security by Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, and Juffer (2003), only three of the 88 experimental studies of maternal sensitivity involved efforts to systematically alter narrative structure (two of the three found expected effects on maternal sensitivity). While these results are encouraging, they hardly constitute a dependable set of findings. Thus, the second study was initiated to provide further experimental evidence of causal linkages between mothers' autobiographical narratives and their parenting sensitivity.

Furthermore, this idea from the AAI that an individual's ability to tell coherent stories about their past and the assumptions that this coherence is linked to attachment has influenced how we have thought about reminiscing and its benefits. Fivush (1991) hypothesized that these memories of the past become important as we recall them to ourselves and others; they form the personal stories, which seem to help define our self-concept. The memories of the past have not only told us what we have done, but also how we feel about the experience (Fivush, 1991). Wahler and Castlebury (2002) posit that the personal narratives, or the stories we tell of everyday life, seem to act as maps or templates of how we develop our understanding of human relationships and interactions with others. These personal accounts provide information that is useful in our interpretation of these past and present experiences, enabling us to understand the social dynamics of these life experiences (Applebee, 1978; Wahler & Castlebury, 2002). In the telling of a personal narrative, the story from the past is brought to the here-and-now, which allows for the speaker to verbally express himself, and further understand and make meaningful his own experiences (Polkinghorne, 1998).

How is it that children begin to form these personal accounts of their past? When children begin to speak, parents elicit stories from their children about everyday experiences and situations. Welch-Ross (1997) concluded that mothers influence the development of their children's ability to actively engage in reminiscing about the past, suggesting that mothers help their children by coordinating varying reminiscences of the past with their own recollections, eventually leading to the children's own narratives.

In order to tell a good story, there are some basic elements the story must contain. Referential information must be presented (what happened), the listener must be oriented to the who, what, where, when, why and how of the story, as well (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Fivush, 1991). Memories of the past also incorporate an internal reaction; most memories are affectively laden. These past experiences are talked about because they serve an evaluative function (Fivush, 1991). By talking about past experiences in which we as observers remember experiencing an emotion, we are better able to understand the meaning of the emotion.

Fivush (1991) originated the idea that children learn story structure from adult-child interactions, which Welch-Ross further explored in the 1997 paper. The adult provides the necessary support in the child's story by linguistically structuring the story for the child. It would seem that parents act as co-constructors of their children's stories. Early conversations may appear to be led by the adult with the child adding minimal information. As the child begins to develop his/her language skills, the child becomes more of an active participant in the retelling of the story. As children's expressive abilities mature, the parents are not as important in the structuring of the stories; the parent and child are able to engage in a dialogue in which they begin to reminisce with their children and talk about past shared experiences (Hudson, 1990). It is not the amount of information recalled or even the content of the story that is important; it is how the information being presented is organized. Thus, parents' and children's narratives are likely to be similar in structure. Depending on mother's own narrative abilities and their willingness to co-construct their children's narratives, the child's stories should be told

with varying degrees of coherence, a property of mother's narratives known to covary with their observed sensitivity to children (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Presumably, the coherence factor in children's narratives should covary with their own sensitivity and adjustment to family life. Likewise, Fivush (1991) demonstrated that mothers labeled as high elaborators (mothers who talk often of the past, ask questions, and elaborate on information about the past) had children who included this type of information as well.

Narrative structure previously has been thought of as comprising one main factor, coherence. The AAI focuses on this factor, coherence, as described by Grice's (1975) four maxims of a coherent discourse (van IJzendoorn, 1995). These four maxims are quality, quantity, relation, and manner. Quality signifies being truthful in the discourse by providing supportive evidence; quantity is understood as having a succinct yet complete narrative; relation denotes the relevancy of the information presented in the narrative; and manner indicates that the narrative is clear and orderly (van IJzendoorn, 1995). Fivush, in 1991, indicated three aspects of narrative structure: temporal organization (inclusion of temporal terms, i.e. then, first, next, before, and the inclusion of causal/conditional terms, i.e. because, so, when, if), narrative density (information included and the number of subject-verb clauses in a dialectic turn), and narrative function (orienting, referential, and evaluative). In a more recent article, Fivush, Hazzard, Sales, Sarfati, and Brown (2003) later defined coherence as four structural patterns originally defined from Peterson and McCabe (1982): disoriented, meaning a confusing or contradictory narrative; chronological, having successive events described in the narrative; ending at the high point, in which the narrative ends at climactic high

point; and classic, in which the narrative builds to high point, dwells on it, and then resolves it (Fivush, Hazzard, Sales, Sarfati, and Brown, 2003). Fivush, et. al (2003) also included 7 categories: action/activity, description, internal states, location, object, person, and temporal (adapted from Fivush, Gray, & Fromhoff 1987).

It appears from previous research that operational definitions for coherence vary a great deal. The present study examines two factors of narrative structure, coherence and richness, which separates it from the current literature. Coherence, which is similar to the construct used in previous studies encompasses an understanding of the main points of the narrative, relevancy, clear progression, lack of tangential remarks, and cohesiveness as a whole (see the scoring manual by Castlebury & Wahler, 1997). Richness includes elaboration on at least one idea, description of a specific or concrete event, lack of vague or ambiguous thinking, evaluative remarks, and information regarding others (Castlebury & Wahler, 1997). The construct of coherence in previous studies seem to overlap with the present author's construct of richness. By separating the two constructs we may be able to partial out variance accounted for by each. We believe that by clearly understanding the variance accounted by both factors of narrative we could better understand the links between narrative and behavior.

In Study I, we seek to examine the relatedness of the narrative structure in the life stories told by mothers and children and to assess the connections between children's narrative structure and indices of their personal adjustment. We hypothesize that the narrative coherence and richness for the mothers will be similar to the children's

narrative structure. We also hypothesize that the children's ability to tell clear and coherent narratives will be indicative of their overall adjustment.

In Study II, we attempt to experimentally manipulate mothers' narrative structure to evaluate the possible effects on mother's responsiveness to her child's behavior and the subsequent changes in child's negative responses to mother. The meta-analysis of Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, and Juffer (2003), suggest that very few studies attempt to experimentally manipulate mothers' narrative structure. In this study, we attempt to provide further experimental evidence of causal linkages between mothers' autobiographical narratives and their parenting sensitivity. We hypothesize that mothers' narrative structure can be altered via the help of a clinician. We believe that as the mothers' modify their narratives, they would also change in terms of maternal responsiveness, and these subsequent changes in maternal responsiveness would have implication for the manner in which the children respond to their mothers.

CHAPTER II

METHODS STUDY I

The data for Study I were obtained from archival data used in a previous study (see the dissertation by Brian J. Adams, 2002).

Sample

Thirty mother-child dyads were recruited for participation from volunteer populations. The dyads were recruited from a suburban elementary school through letters, which were sent home with the students. All of the families were Caucasian, most were two-parent households, and most were of middle socioeconomic status. All of the children were in elementary school and ranged in age from 6 to 11 years old, (M = 8.65 years, SD = 1.52). There were eighteen males and ten females. A t-test between gender for coherence [$t(23) = 2.667$, $p < .02$] showed that there were significant differences between males and females. The mean coherence scores for males (M = 4.875, SD = .238) indicated that the males had higher coherence scores than the females (M = 4.537, SD = .387). A t-test for richness [$t(22) = -.453$, $p = .655$] indicated no difference between gender. T-test between gender for total behavioral scores on the CBCL indicated no differences between males and females [$t(25) = -1.761$, $p = .09$]. The t-test for internalizing scores on the CBCL indicated no differences between gender [$t(22) = -1.039$, $p = 3.10$]. The t-test for externalizing scores on the CBCL showed that there were significant differences between the males and females [$t(22) = -2.061$, $p = .05$]. The

mean externalizing score for the females (M = 48.83, SD = 10.85) indicated that the females had higher scores on the externalizing scales of the CBCL than the males (M = 39.94, SD = 8.58). One-way ANOVAs for age indicated no differences for coherence [$F(5,19) = 1.833$, $p = .154$] and richness [$F(5,18) = .796$, $p = .567$]. One-way ANOVAs for age showed no significant differences for total CBCL scores [$F(5,20) = .938$, $p = .478$], internalizing scores [$F(5,18) = .165$, $p = .972$], and externalizing scores [$F(5,18) = 1.334$, $p = .294$].

Procedure

Letters announcing the study were sent home with students from a suburban elementary school. The interested families signed the letters and brought them back to the school. A member of the research team called the interested families to provide more in-depth information about the study and to establish appointments for home visits. Participants were treated according to the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 1992).

Undergraduate and graduate students gathered data from the home visits. The mothers and children were separated in order to conduct the Personal Narrative interviews, which are structured interviews established by Castlebury and Wahler (1997). These interviews were audio taped for later transcribing upon consent from the parent. Narratives were coded for coherence and richness using the system outlined by Castlebury and Wahler (1997). The parent also completed the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986) during the visit.

Measures

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986) is completed by a parent and may be used as an index of personal adjustment for children between the ages of 4-18. This measure assesses internalizing and externalizing problems, with scales that include anxiety, depression, communication, social withdrawal.

Personal Narrative Codes

Personal narratives were collected from both the parent and the child by the observer through prompts to talk about their own experiences. Narrative interviews consisted of six open-ended questions (see Appendix B for complete list), followed by the prompt, "Is there anything else you'd like to add?" Each question was then treated as its own chapter and coded using Castlebury and Wahler's (1997) coding manual.

Narratives were scored for coherence and richness, using the system of yes-no questions (see Appendix C for questions). The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for mother narrative coherence = .68 and the alpha = .81, and the ICC for mother richness = .80, alpha = .89. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for child narrative coherence = .67 and the alpha = .80, and the ICC for child richness = .71, alpha = .83. Note that the ICCs for both mother and child coherence were weak, indicating a problem in the forthcoming interpretations of our findings.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS STUDY I

All Tables and Figures for Study I can be found in the Appendices.

Descriptive statistics of the measures used in Study I can be found in Table A-1. Each chapter for both the mothers' and children's narratives was given a score for coherence and richness, which ranged from 0-5; a score of 5 was the highest score, and a score of 0 was the lowest score. The mothers' mean chapter scores for coherence ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .72$) and richness ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .67$) indicated that the mothers' narratives were highly coherent but only moderately rich. The children's mean chapter scores of coherence ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .36$) and richness ($M = 1.28$, $SD = .42$) indicated that the children also had highly coherent narratives with little richness. The reported scores for the CBCL are T-scores; a T-score above 70 was considered in the clinical range for behaviors. The children's mean Total Behaviors ($M = 44.96$, $SD = 9.95$), Internalizing Behaviors ($M = 49.36$, $SD = 8.93$), and Externalizing Behaviors ($M = 43.16$, $SD = 10.78$) were in the normal range.

Table A-2 presents the correlations between the mother and child measures used in Study I. There was a modest correlation between the mothers' narrative coherence and richness scores ($r = .436$, $p < .05$), as well as a modest correlation between mothers' narrative richness scores and children's narrative coherence scores ($r = .386$, $p = .052$).

The correlation between child CBCL scores and the children's narrative coherence scores was ($r = -.485$, $p < .05$).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION STUDY I

Study I was an exploratory project to assess the possible relationships between the two structure values of normal mothers' and children's narratives and to assess expected covariates of these narrative coherence and richness scores. The results show that mothers' narrative coherence and richness covary, mothers' narrative richness and children's narrative coherence covary, and children's narrative coherence is inversely related to children's externalizing behaviors. Previous research (Fivush, 1991, and Welch-Ross, 1997) indicated that mothers do influence their children's ability to reminisce about the past, and the present study's findings support our hypothesis that mothers' and children's narratives are related. As mothers help their children reminisce about the past, the mothers' ability to elicit a rich and colorful story aids their children's ability to tell coherent personal stories. Welch-Ross (1997) also postulated that children use language as means of expressing their mental representations of the self and others. The children in our sample appear to have a coherent representation of themselves and the past, noted by their coherent narratives, which may also be indicative of their overall adjustment. The results show that as the children's narratives increase in coherence, the reported externalizing behaviors from the CBCL decrease; perhaps as the children's ability to make sense of themselves and their past increases, they are better equip to cope with the challenges of family life.

The findings generate another question about the relationship between narrative and behavior: What is the missing link between narrative structure and behavior? Prior research suggests that the missing link is maternal responsiveness, an important component in parenting (Wahler, et al, 2001; Solomonica-Levi, et al, 2001). A responsive parent understands the complexities involved in the parent-child relationship; the responsive parent can set appropriate limits with the child yet encourage the child to voice his/her own thoughts, opinions, and feelings (Wahler, et al, 2001). How one can become a responsive parent is still unknown, but van IJzendoorn's 1995 meta-analysis suggested that parents' abilities to tell coherent stories about life in their families of origin might contribute to maternal sensitivity and subsequent responsiveness to child behavior.

These questions generated from Study I and van IJzendoorn's 1995 meta-analysis lead to the inclusion of Study II. We hoped that Study II would help clarify the links between narrative and behavior.

CHAPTER V

METHODS STUDY II

The data for Study II were obtained from archival data used in a previous study, (see Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993).

Sample

Twenty-nine mother-child dyads were recruited through the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic, in which the mothers sought help for parenting problems with their children (see Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993). In all cases, the mothers described their children as having disruptive behavioral problems with their children, characterized as refusals to follow instructions or to obey rules, demands for mother's compliance or attention, temper outbursts, whining, nagging, and hitting. Most of the mothers were single parents (38%) and all were of low socioeconomic status, with an average monthly income of $1384.00 (SD = $1099.00). All of the referred children were Caucasian males in elementary school, ranging in age from 6 to 8 years old, with an average age of 7.55 years (SD = 2.33). The sample included in the present study was reduced to ten mother-child dyads; these ten dyads had narrative recordings during the clinical conversation sessions and the SOC-R home observations.

This sample was similar to the multistressed mother-child dyads studied earlier by Wahler (1980) and Webster-Stratten (1985). These studies demonstrated that as a whole the mother-child dyads did not benefit from such interventions as parental training

(Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993). Because mothers similar to the present sample did not benefit from traditional parent training, as seen by Wahler (1980) and Webster-Stratten (1985), we believe that the addition of the synthesis training, helping the mothers to modify their personal narratives and gain insight into their parenting practices, to the traditional parent training could enhance the effects of parent training. If the synthesis teaching is shown to enhance the effects of traditional parent training, then there ought to be an improvement in the responsiveness of mothers' reactions to her child's behaviors (Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993). Wahler, Williams, and Cerezo (1990) indicated that responsiveness in mothers' responses to her child's behaviors is a critical component of successful parenting.

Procedure

Five mother-child dyads randomly were assigned to a control group (Discussion) and the other five were randomly assigned to the experimental group (Synthesis Teaching). The mothers in both the Discussion and the Synthesis Teaching groups had twelve consecutive weekly meetings with a graduate student who was proficient in parent training as well as the narrative discussion and teaching procedures. The twelve weekly clinic conversation meetings were fifty minute sessions in which the mother initially reported on her child's behaviors and other parenting issues with respect her child's behavior problems. In the Discussion sessions (the control group), the thematic content of the conversations between the mother and clinician included only the parenting issues between the mother-child dyads; the graduate student clinician did not prompt for elaboration on these issues nor did the graduate student clinician ask for information

about other life events from the mother. In the Synthesis Teaching sessions (the experimental group), the mother-child interactions also were discussed but were broadened through clinical prompts and questions geared to encourage the mothers to elaborate on their relationships with their children, significant others, as well as their previous life experiences.

The twelve weekly clinical sessions were recorded and transcribed for both the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups. Transcripts of the recordings were segmented by the 12 clinical conversation sessions. These narratives were coded over the 12 clinical sessions using rating scales to assess coherence and richness on the stories (see the manual by Castlebury and Wahler, 1997).

During the 12 week period, direct observational measures of interactions between the mother-child dyads for the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups also were sampled through 1-hour home sessions. The SOC-R coding system was used to code these videotaped interactions, which included the mother and child engaging in various activities (i.e. homework, cooking, playing a game) without interruption (i.e. television, telephone, other individuals). Prior to the beginning of the clinical conversation session, a baseline for the home observations was gathered. Once the clinical conversations began, the parent training from the home observations commenced. For each group, Discussion and Synthesis Teaching, one home observation was videotaped per week of the experiment, for a total of 12 videotaped observations per dyad.

In both the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups, the mothers and graduate student clinicians reviewed the baseline videotapes, and together they assessed the

interactions for maladaptive and prosocial behaviors between the mother and the child. The mother and clinician discussed appropriate methods of parental responding to the child's negative behaviors to avoid escalations, which could decrease those negative child behaviors. They agreed on the negative child responses that should result in time-out and those behaviors to be followed with ignoring or disapproval; child prosocial responses also were identified, which were to result in praise.

The parent training was centered on reviews of the videotaped home observation sessions for purposes of highlighting each mother's appropriate and inappropriate parenting tactics, such as arguing, ignoring, time-out, unclear instructions, praise, and complaints (Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993). The mothers were taught to use a discipline strategy, in which her commands and rules were backed by time-out. If the child were to break a rule or disobey they would immediately be removed from the interaction and isolated (i.e. a chair in the corner). The mothers also were taught a reflective listening strategy with the intent for the mother to develop and gain knowledge about her child's ideas and opinions, thus demonstrating a genuine interest in her child's activities. While enacting the reflective listening strategy, the mother would offer descriptive comments about her child's actions (i.e. "You almost made that shot."), by asking questions (i.e. "How do you know that will work?), or through praise (i.e. "You did a great job.") (Wahler, Cartor, Fleischman, & Lambert, 1993).

The videotaped home observations were coded using the SOC-R method for indices of mothers' appropriate reactions (mothers' responsiveness) to all child responses during each 1-hour session and for the child negative response category, which was an

aggregate of specific codes (i.e. non-compliance, complaints, insults, property destruction, physical assault, and other temper outbursts). The home observation videotapes were coded by two observers.

Measures

Personal Narrative Codes

For both the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups, the clinical conversations between the mothers and the graduate student clinicians were videotaped and transcribed. Transcripts of the clinical conversation narratives were coded over 12 clinical sessions using rating scales to assess coherence and richness on the stories (see the manual by Castlebury and Wahler, 1997; Appendix B & C for complete list). The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for narrative coherence = .90 and the alpha =.86, and the ICC for richness = .88, and the alpha =.72.

Home Observation Codes

Home Observation Codes

Two indices of mother and child behavior were defined from some of the Standardized Observation Codes-Revised (SOC-R codes, see Cerezo, 1988), and each was quantified as the proportion of 15-second intervals in which one or more of the relevant codes emerged. The relevant codes were:

- *Child Negativity.* This index was comprised of six codes describing child disobedience, child demands, complaints, and rule breaking.
- *Mother Responsiveness.* This index was defined by patterns of mothers' sensitivity to her children's behaviors and inconsistencies during the

mother-child interactions. Maternal sensitivity is a reflection of how appropriately the mother can respond to the full range of her child's emotions and behaviors. Each mother and child behaviors were classified by valence (positive, negative, and neutral). It was determined whether the mother's behaviors were of the same valence as her child's by examining each interaction in which the mother's behavior followed her child's. The mother responsiveness index was the percentage of behavior valences (positive, negative, and neutral) which did not match her child's behavior valences in each exchange; a higher responsiveness score reflected consistent exchanges, or matching behavior valences between the dyad, and a lower responsiveness score was given to inconsistent exchanges, or non-matching behavior valences between the mother and her child.

The videotaped home observations were coded through use of the Standardized Observation Codes-Revised (see Cerezo, 1988). The SOC-R system includes a manual describing 23 responses commonly seen when a mother and child are interacting at home. The reliability for the SOC-R has been documented in several studies (see Cerezo, 1988); however its accuracy depends on the performance of the observers who use it. The observers for the present study were undergraduate research assistants enrolled at the University of Tennessee. When the observers completed their training in the SOC-R system, each was assessed for scoring reliability on an average of 20% of the coding

sessions. The Interclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for the SOC-R in Study II for mother responsiveness = .98, and for child negativity = .88.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS STUDY II

All Tables and Figures for Study II can be found in the Appendices.

Maternal narrative scores, maternal measures of responsiveness, and children's negativity scores were summarized as means and standard deviations over the 12 weekly clinic sessions (mother's narrative scores) and 12 weekly home observation sessions (mother and child interactions scores), and these summaries can be found in Table A-3. Scores for maternal narrative coherence and richness, maternal responsiveness, and children's negativity presented in Study II were aggregated across the 5 participants in the Discussion group and the 5 participants in the Synthesis teaching group. The mothers' clinical conversations with the graduate students were coded for coherence and richness, which ranged from 0-5; a score of 5 was the highest score, and a score of 0 was the lowest score. SOC-R scores for maternal responsiveness and child negativity were percentages of appropriate responses during the mother-child interaction.

The mothers' mean scores for narrative coherence in the Discussion group ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .303$) and in the Synthesis Teaching group ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .380$) indicated that the mothers in the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups had moderately coherent narratives. Figure A-1 summarizes mean ratings of the 10 mothers' narrative coherence scores across the 12 clinical conversation sessions. A t-test between the two groups did not show a significant difference (t [df 8] = 1.372, $p = .21$). This comparison

of means indicated that the mothers in the Discussion group and mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group did not differ with regards to mean narrative coherence scores. The means for the mothers in the Discussion group were slightly higher than the means of the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group, indicating that the mothers in the Discussion group elicited more coherent narratives than mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group.

Figure A-2 summarizes the mean ratings of the 10 mothers' narrative richness scores along the 12 clinical conversation sessions. The t-test between the narrative richness scores of the Discussion (M = 1.58, SD = .244) and the Synthesis Teaching (M = 2.90, SD = .251) groups showed a significant difference (t [df 8] = -8.39, p< .000), indicating that mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group produced richer narratives than the mothers in the Discussion group.

The home observations of the 10 mothers' responsiveness to their children's behaviors shown in Figure A-3 demonstrate similar baseline proportion scores for the two groups of mothers. The home based parent training occurred for both groups during clinic sessions 1 through 12; we expected both groups of mothers to improve their appropriate responses to their children's behaviors during the parent training offered by the graduate student clinician. A t-test between SOC-R scores of maternal responsiveness for the Discussion (M = .827, SD = .019) and the Synthesis Teaching (M = .899, SD = .040) groups produced a significant difference (t [df 8] = -4.518, p< .002), indicating that mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group had higher ratings of appropriate responses to their children compared to the Discussion group.

Children's negativity scores were also obtained during the home observations over baseline and during the 12 home observations matching with the mothers' clinical conversation sessions. Due to missing data, we lacked individual data of child negativity scores for the 10 children. Our data consisted of the mean child negativity scores from the 12 home observations. Figure A-4 demonstrated that the two groups of children did not show consistent differences in their mean levels of negativity until session 9. For the remaining 4 sessions there was no overlap in standard deviations for the two group means, suggesting that children, whose mothers became consistently more responsive in their parenting reactions, eventually reduced their negativity. The means of the child negativity scores for the Synthesis Teaching group (M = .096, SD = .054) is lower than the means of child negativity scores for the Discussion group (M = .133, SD = .023It appears that there is a trend in the means, such that the children in the Synthesis Teaching group decreased their negativity in the home observations compared to the Discussion group. We are limited by our missing data and are unable to make inferences beyond our sample.

Correlation matrices for the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups can be found in Tables A-4-5. The correlations were conducted with the aggregated means for narrative coherence, narrative richness, mothers' responsiveness, and child negativity over the 12 week period. Due to the missing data of child negativity, we were unable to assess relationships between these variables using the individual means. We understand that by using the aggregated data we lose within group variation, and the correlations may overestimate the magnitude of these relationships (see Robinson, 1950). There were

no significant correlations between the variables in the Discussion group, but there were strong correlations in the Synthesis Teaching group. In the Synthesis Teaching group, a strong negative correlation was found between the mothers' narrative richness scores and children's negativity scores ($r = -.740$, $p < .01$), and a strong positive correlation can be seen between mothers' narrative richness scores and mothers' responsiveness scores ($r = .710$, $p < .01$). A moderate negative correlation was found between mothers' responsiveness scores and children's negativity scores ($r = -.539$, $p < .10$). A multiple regression analysis was then conducted to further investigate the relationships between mothers' narrative richness, mothers' responsiveness, and children's negativity, which can be found in Table A-6. This regression analysis indicates that the overall model was significant ($F(2, 9) = 5.460$, $p = .028$), and this analysis indicated that mothers' narrative richness ($\beta = -.720$, $t = -2.264$, $p = .05$) predicted children's negativity rather than mothers' responsiveness ($\beta = -.028$, $t = -.089$, $p = .931$).

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION STUDY II

Following the findings form Study I and the van IJzendoorn finding, Study II attempted to experimentally manipulate mothers' narratives to assess possible changes in their responsiveness and subsequently the children's negativity. The 1993, Wahler, Carter, Fleischman, and Lambert paper offered experimental evidence for synthesis teaching as a means of restructuring troubled mothers' personal narratives, if we could code the transcribed narratives for coherence and richness. Our re-analysis of what happened during synthesis teaching for 5 mothers compared to a control group of 5 mothers allowed us to study the impact of these changes on the mothers' responsiveness and their children's negativity.

Our findings were both suggestive and puzzling. It was clear that clinicians in the Synthesis Teaching group helped these mothers to generate richer stories about parenting issues with their troubled children. The enrichment occurred when the prompted and questioned mothers expanded the context or background of these stories by citing recent and long passed experiences they found to be relevant to their parenting struggles. However, they did so in ways that might have weakened the coherence of their stories. There was a trend in the narrative coherence means such that the mothers in the Discussion group had more coherent stories compared to mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group. This finding suggests that although the mothers in the Synthesis

Teaching group worked to enrich their narratives, the coherence of their stories was weakened, however this finding was not significant. When one elaborates on a story topic, more information regarding the topic is given, which could lead to problems in organizing this information resulting in a lack of coherence, such as tangential thoughts or non-referential material. Perhaps, the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group had a difficult time mentally integrating the story elaborations into their current story plots. This was a surprising finding, and future research should explore this phenomenon.

Across the 12 week conversation and parent-training sessions, mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group increased their responsiveness compared to the mothers in the Discussion group. All of the mothers in this study received the same parent-training skills incorporating discipline strategies as well as reflective listening skills. We hypothesized that the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group would be able to do so through their production of richer narratives. As the clinicians helped these mothers to elaborate on their parenting struggles and to restructure their personal narratives, they possibly enabled the mothers to view their children's behaviors more objectively.

The mean child negativity scores for the children in the Synthesis Teach group appeared to decrease after the ninth home observation compared to the mean child negativity scores for the children in the Discussion group, although we were unable to infer significance. We hypothesized that the children in the Synthesis Teaching group would decrease their negativity toward their mother compared to the children in the Discussion group. The general trends in the mean child negativity scores across the 12

home observations appear to confirm this hypothesis; however, due to the extent of our missing data, we are unable to comment further.

The results from Study II demonstrate that the children in the Synthesis Teaching group decreased their negativity in accordance with their mothers' increased responsiveness compared to the children and mothers in the Discussion group. We hypothesized that this difference would be directly correlated with to the mothers increased responsiveness; however, our results did not support a correlational link between the mothers' and children's behaviors. We did find a sizeable negative correlation between mothers' responsiveness and children's negativity, but it was not as strong as the correlation between mothers' narrative richness and children's negativity. The regression analysis indicated that mothers' narrative richness scores predicted children's negativity scores. Perhaps this lack of association between mothers' responsiveness and children's negativity is related to the small sample size in Study II. We also acknowledge the ecological fallacy we are making with these correlations; it is difficult to conclude what the correlations are between mothers' responsiveness and child negativity based on individual level data. If this study were replicated, a larger sample size could confirm this hypothesis.

Our results indicate that troubled mothers' personal narratives can be restructured in richness. Along with the change of narrative richness in the Synthesis Teaching group, a change in mothers' responsiveness was also noted. The narrative structure of richness was directly related to mothers' responsiveness, and the results are suggestive that it is narrative richness which contributes to maternal responsiveness. The van IJzendoorn

meta-analysis demonstrated that mothers' narrative coherence contributed 12% of the variance in maternal responsiveness, and perhaps this difference in our findings is related to our operational definitions of coherence. Van IJzendoorn's construct of coherence appears to include elements similar to our construct of richness. We separated these two constructs in hopes of assessing out the variance accounted for each in relation to maternal responsiveness. Our findings show that personal narrative richness is more of a contributing factor to maternal responsiveness than is narrative coherence.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Study I indicates that mothers' narrative structure and children's narrative structure are indeed related in non-clinical populations. The mothers' ability to elicit a colorful and elaborative narrative is related to the children's ability to tell clear and relevant stories. As the mothers help their children reminisce about the past, the elaborative nature of these mothers' stories help their children organize and structure their own responses coherently.

The present study also indicates a correlational link between children's narrative coherence and their adjustment. The more coherent the children's narratives, the fewer reported externalizing behaviors problems. It appears that the children who possess the ability to structure and organize their thoughts of the past, present, and future are better able to cope with the challenges of their lives. However, due to the correlational nature of this finding, we cannot assume causation.

We believe that there is a missing link between the mothers' behaviors and children's behaviors. There must be something the mothers' are doing to help their children cope with their environments. We think that maternal responsiveness is this missing link. To better understand this link between maternal behaviors and children's behaviors we included a separate study where we attempted to change mothers' narrative

structure through the help of a clinician and provide parent-training to assess the possible implications of maternal behaviors on their children.

In Study II, we chose to examine maternal responsiveness in clinical populations where the mothers were seeking help with their parenting practices. The findings in Study II indicate that maternal narrative richness can be changed through discussions with a clinician. The mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group elicited richer narratives compared to mothers in the Discussion group. These same mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group were also able to respond to their children more appropriately, and their children responded in kind by decreasing their negative responses to their mothers.

Although both groups of mothers received the same kind of parent training, the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group were more responsive to their children, and their children demonstrated fewer negative responses compare to those in the Discussion group. We believe that the difference was due to the manipulations in narrative structure.

It appears that the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group obtained more knowledge about themselves and their children through exploring their lives with the clinician. Perhaps the clinicians helped the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group to view their own lives and their children's behaviors more objectively. This new objectivity in viewing their children's behaviors possibly helped the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group to respond more appropriately to their children.

Study II does indicate that maternal behaviors are linked to their children's behaviors. This study also points out that mothers' narrative richness plays an important

role in mothers' responsiveness. However, we are still unclear about the direct relationships between narrative and responsiveness.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A major limitation for Study I is the correlational nature of the data, thus we cannot infer causation. The data collected for Study I were from volunteers from a suburban elementary school, which limits the generalizability to other samples, including those from Study II, which included participants recruited through the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic. Another limitation is the low ICC for both mother and child coherence, which may prove to be a problem in the interpretations of our findings.

Data for Study II were collected across 12 weeks. However, due to sampling size we were unable to conduct repeated measures analyses, thus we cannot determine if there were any trends between the Discussion and Synthesis Teaching groups over time. The data were also aggregated across the dyads in both groups limiting individual variation in the sample. If the data were more reflective of the individual changes we possible could have seen different associations between the variables. We also had difficulty with missing data for child negativity scores; we were unable to calculate individual means for the five children in each group. The data presented are aggregated means over the 12 home observations. Because of this, we were unable to provide inferences about the differences between the two groups beyond our original sample. The correlations and regression analysis in Study II assessed relationships using the aggregated data across the 12 week period, which does not reflect individual variation. The correlations may be overestimated and we cannot infer what the true correlations are.

A complication in Study II is the phenomenon related to therapeutic alliance. The mother participants worked closely with a graduate student clinician for 12 weeks. Through the intensive therapeutic work, we anticipated that a working relationship would be formed for all mothers and clinicians. However, we did not anticipate that relationships between the mothers and the clinicians could differ amongst the two groups. Perhaps the maternal changes in personal narrative richness and maternal responsiveness noted in the Synthesis Teaching group were related to therapeutic alliance. The mothers' in the Synthesis Teaching group were encouraged to elaborate on their personal narratives by their clinician through prompts. These mothers were allowed to integrate their own childhood experiences, relationships with significant others, as well as aspects of daily living into their discussions of parenting problems; thus the clinicians working with the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group could have been viewed as more sympathetic or interested in their stories. The clinicians working with the Discussion group mothers were constrained by protocol and could not prompt for more information regarding the mothers' lives. The mothers in the Discussion group were not encouraged to make associations between their parental experiences and other experiences past or present. Thus, the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group could have felt more aligned with their clinician and wanted to work harder on their parenting skills compared to the mothers in the Discussion group. We believe that therapeutic alliance could be an important factor in parent-training, and future research related to parent training should incorporate measures to assess for therapeutic alliance.

Despite these limitations, the study has important clinical implications. Our understanding of parenting practices is incomplete. The notion of parental responsiveness as being an important factor in parenting skills is unclear. We correctly hypothesized that responsiveness could be changed through the restructuring of troubled mothers' personal narratives following van IJzendoorn suggestions that responsiveness is a measure of parental attachment, which can be elicited through stories (1995). Van IJzendoorn stated that the narrative coherence was related to maternal responsiveness. We thought that perhaps another factor other than narrative coherence was of importance. The present study coded the personal narratives utilizing two factors, coherence and richness, whereas our definition of richness was similar to the definition of coherence as stated by van IJzendoorn.

The findings in the present study demonstrated that the narrative coherence between the two groups of mothers differed after the 12 weeks of parent-training, whereas the mothers in the Discussion group elicited more coherent narratives compared to the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group, which was not expected. However, we did correctly predict that mothers' narrative richness would increase in the Synthesis Teaching group compared to the Discussion group. Likewise, maternal responsiveness was greater among the mothers in the Synthesis Teaching group compared to the mothers in the Discussion group. Unlike van IJzendoorn's meta-analysis, we did not find any significant associations between mothers' narrative coherence and maternal responsiveness; however this difference was most likely related to our definitions of the coherence and richness. Our findings did show a strong relationship between mothers'

narrative richness and maternal responsiveness, leading us to postulate that narrative richness is an important factor related to maternal responsiveness. The findings also demonstrate negative relationships between mothers' narrative richness and children's negativity and maternal responsiveness and children's negativity. Further investigation showed that mothers' narrative richness was a better predictor of decreasing children's negativity than was maternal responsiveness, which is curious because previous studies indicated that maternal responsiveness directly affected children's negativity. It is quite possible that narrative richness is more important than we expected.

The present study also indicated that narrative structure can be manipulated and possibly changed, which may have positive implications for parental sensitivity. Study II ought to be replicated with a larger sample size and include measurements of therapeutic alliance to confirm the results. If the preliminary data from Study II is correctly suggesting that changes to parental responsiveness can be made, the way we view parent training will need to be modified.

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APPENDICES

Table A-1

Means and Standard Deviations for Study I

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Child Coherence	27	4.72	.36
Child Richness	27	1.28	.42
Mother Coherence	26	4.44	.72
Mother Richness	26	2.23	.67
Total Behavior	28	44.96	9.95
Internalizing Behavior	25	49.36	8.93
Externalizing Behavior	25	43.16	10.78

Note: Child Coherence, Child Richness, Mother Coherence, Mother Richness are mean chapter scores from the Personal Narrative Interview. Total Behavior, Internalizing Behavior, and Externalizing Behavior are T-scores of the CBCL. A T-score above 70 is considered in the clinical range.

Table A-2

Correlation Matrix for Study I

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Child Coherence	1	.336	.262	.386(*)	-.224	.080	-.485(*)
2. Child Richness	--	1	-.133	.202	-.136	-.037	-.160
3. Mother Coherence	--	--	1	.436(*)	.014	.165	-.290
4. Mother Richness	--	--	--	1	-.063	.136	-.333
5. Total Behavior	--	--	--	--	1	.841(**)	.841(**)
6. Internalizing Beh.	--	--	--	--	--	1	.547(**)
7. Externalizing Beh.	--	--	--	--	--	--	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table A-3

Means and Standard Deviations of the Discussion Group and Synthesis Teaching Group for Study II

	Discussion			Synthesis Teaching		
Variable	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Mother Coherence*	5	2.63	.303	5	2.33	. 380
Mother Richness*	5	1.58	.244	5	2.90	. 251
Mother Responsiveness**	5	.827	.019	5	.899	.040
Child Negativity***	12	.132	.022	12	.096	.054

Note: *Mother Coherence and Mother Richness are mean narrative scores over the 12 weekly clinical conversation sessions. **Mother Responsiveness is mean SOC-R responses in 15-second intervals from the home observations. ***Child Negativity is aggregated mean SOC-R responses in 15-second intervals from the 12 repeated home observations between the 10 dyads.

Table A-4

Correlation Matrix for the Discussion Group for Study II

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Mother Coherence	1	-.169	-.431	.014
2. Mother Richness	--	1	.257	-.436
3. Mother Responsiveness	--	--	1	-.563
4. Child Negativity	--	--	--	1

Table A-5

Correlation Matrix for the Synthesis Group for Study II

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Mother Coherence	1	-.138	-.397	-.105
2. Mother Richness	--	1	.710(**)	-.740(**)
3. Mother Responsiveness	--	--	1	-.539(*)
4. Child Negativity	--	--	--	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table A-6

Summary Regression Analysis Investigating the Relationship Between Mother Narrative Richness and Mother Responsiveness on Children's Negativity

	B	SE	β
Mother Richness	-.045	.020	-.720*
Mother Responsiveness	-.038	.422	-.028

* $t = -2.264$, $p < .05$
$R^2 = .548$, $F(2,9) = 5.460$, $p < .05$

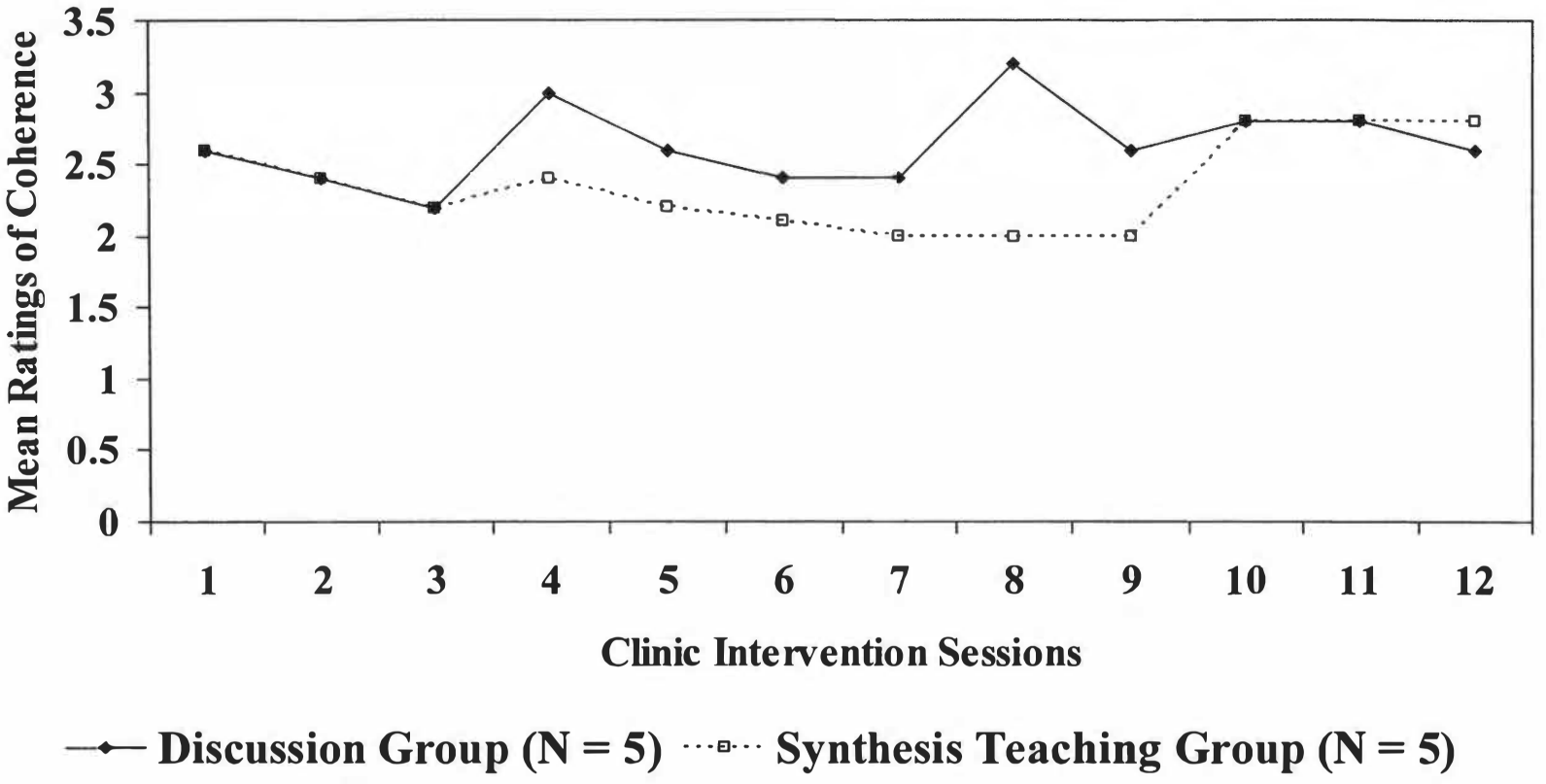

Figure A-1

Mean coherence scores for mother's narratives about parenting problems

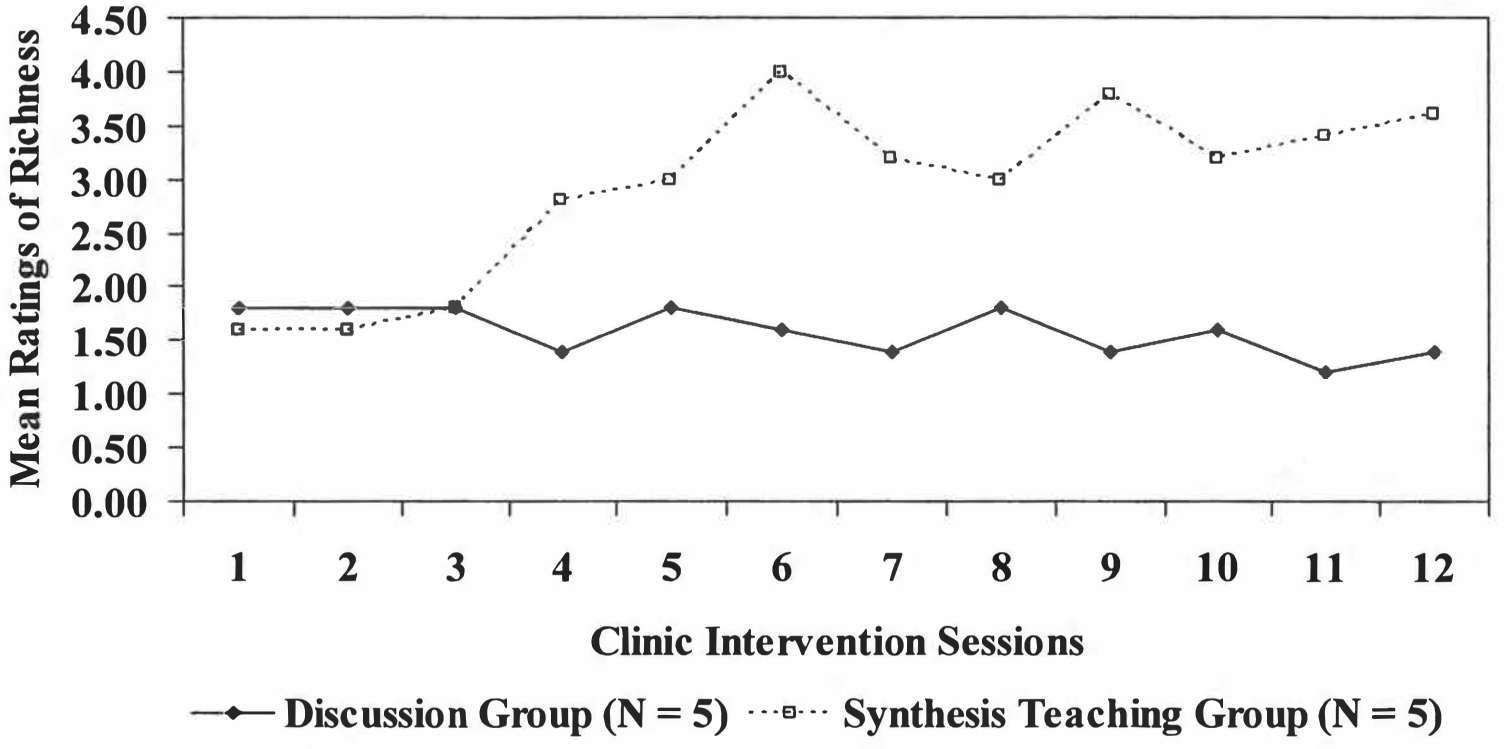

Figure A-2

Mean richness scores for mother's narratives about parenting problems

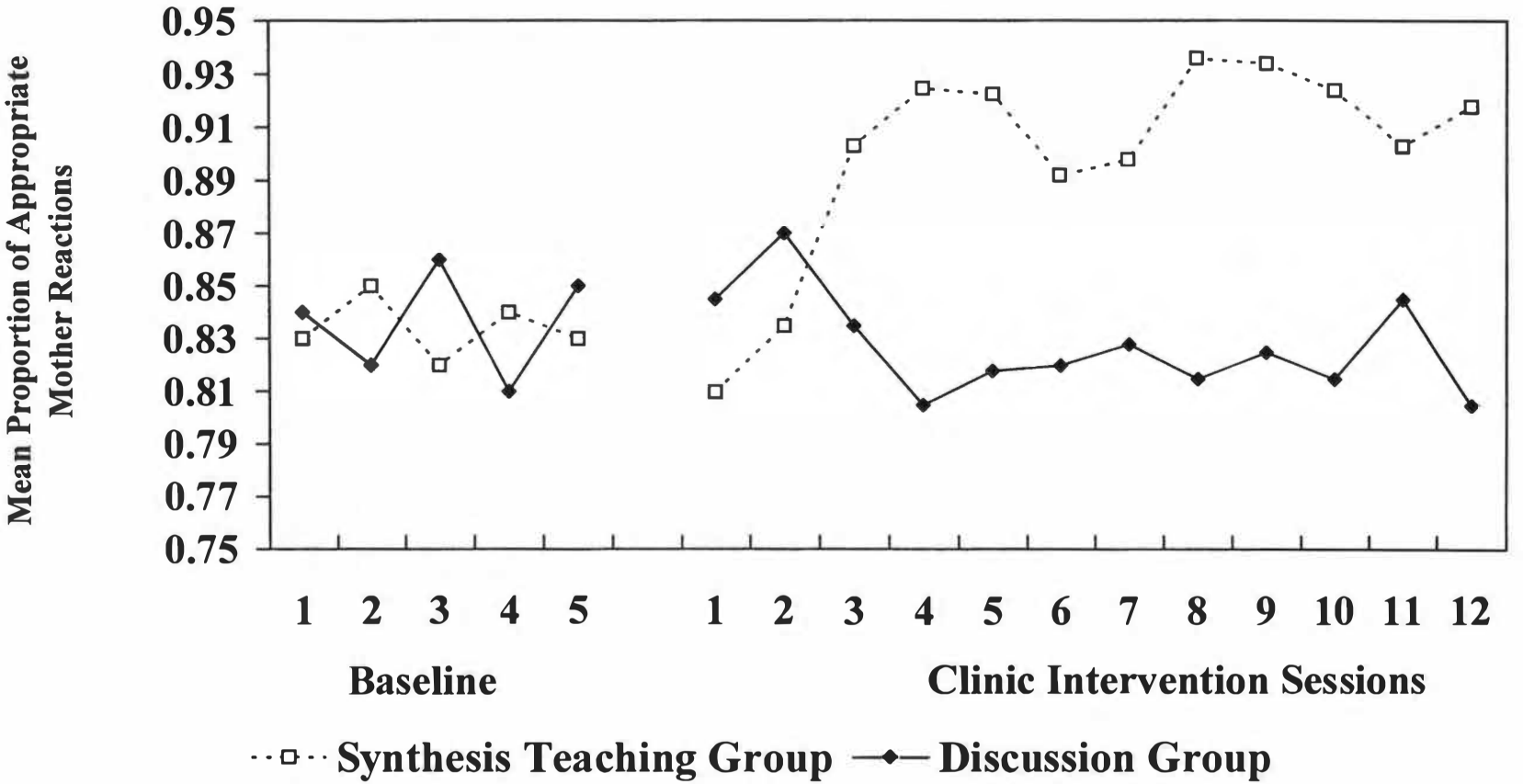

Figure A-3

Mean proportions of mother's responsiveness to their children's behaviors during home observations

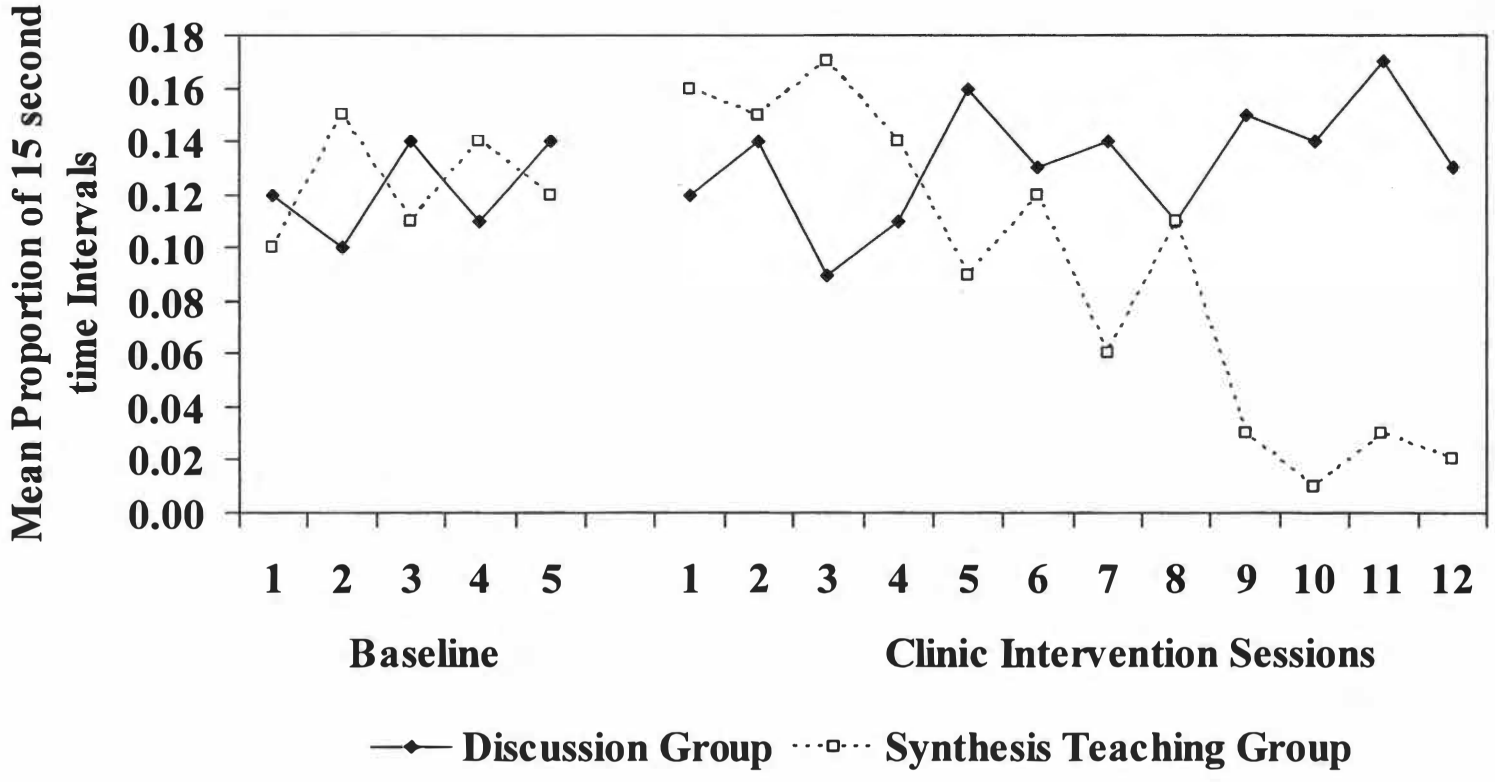

Figure A-4

Children's negativity during home observations

Appendix B

Parent Personal Narrative About Life at Home: Interview Guidelines

1. Can you give me an idea of what you do as a parent and as a family member?
2. What do you like best about it?
3. What don't you like about it?
4. What was the most interesting thing you were involved in during the last month?
5. Who takes up the biggest share of you time? Try to remember that last time you did something with this person.
6. Compare your family with your family when you were growing up. What are the differences and similarities?

Child Personal Narrative About Life at Home: Interview Guidelines

1. Tell me about what you do at home.
2. What do you like best about being there?
3. What don't you like about being there?
4. What was the most interesting thing that happened at home during the last month?
5. Who do you usually do things with at home? Try to remember the last time you did something with this person.
6. What did your parents expect from you when you were little, and what did you expect from them? How have things changed from then to now?

Appendix C

Coherence

1. Upon reading the narrative, do you as the listener *clearly* get the *point (or points)* made by the narrator?
2. Are all the ideas or happenings presented by the narrator *relevant* to the question being asked?
3. Does the narrator's response follow a *clear* progression (beginning, middle, end)?
4. Is the narrator's response free of *tangential* remarks?
5. Do the *parts* of the narrator's response fit together to form a *sensible whole*?

Richness

1. Is at least one ideas or happening introduced by the narrator *elaborated* beyond its initial introduction?
2. Is at least one *specific* or *concrete event* described?
3. Is the narrator's response free of *vague* or *ambiguous* thought?
4. Does the narrator support a presented idea or happening with *evaluative* remarks?
5. Does the narrator provide information with regard to *others*?

VITA

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